



Name of Property:	USS <i>Constellation</i> (updated documentation)
City, State:	Baltimore, Maryland
Significant Dates:	1853-1945
NHL Criteria:	1
NHL Theme:	IV. Shaping the Political Landscape 3. Military Institutions and Activities VIII. Changing Role of the United States in the World Community 1. International Relations
Previous Recognition:	1963 National Historic Landmark
National Historic Context:	V. Political and Military Affairs, 1783-1860 J. The Rise of Sectionalism, 1840-1859 K. The Army and Navy VII. Political and Military Affairs, 1865-1939 D. America Becomes a World Power, 1865-1914 2. Politics and Diplomacy XXXI. Social and Humanitarian Movements D. Abolitionism
NHL Significance:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the nineteenth century, the USS <i>Constellation</i> was nationally significant for its ante-bellum service, particularly for its role in the effort to end the slave trade. When the

small local Revenue Cutter Service proved inadequate in ending the foreign slave trade, Congress passed laws to broaden the power of the Revenue Cutter Service and added a United States naval squadron to capture American slavers on the Atlantic. As a one-time flagship of the squadron, and a successful hunter of slavers on the coast of Africa, *Constellation* is the single most important surviving remnant of the African Anti-Slavery Patrol.

- From her beginning, *Constellation* marked a turning point in the technological history of the United States Navy. From *Constellation* onward, the Navy built only steam-powered vessels. By the mid-1850s, steam power had progressed to where it became standard for any naval warship going into battle. The *Constellation* illustrates the ultimate development and pinnacle of the wooden sailing warship.
- The *Constellation*'s wartime service during the Civil War, and other contributions to international relations, extended the ship's significance through the close of the nineteenth century and into World War II. The *Constellation*'s naval service spanned one hundred years from its commissioning on July 28, 1855, at the Norfolk Navy Yard in Virginia, to final decommissioning on February 4, 1955, at Baltimore, Maryland.

Integrity:

- At one time, it was believed that *Constellation* was a 1797 ship contemporary to the frigate *Constitution* moored in Boston. This led to a long-standing controversy over the actual identity of the *Constellation*. Howard I. Chapelle, Curator of Transportation at the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, argued that contemporary documentation supported an 1853-54 construction date. The matter was open to debate until an extensive restoration was undertaken.
- The Navy's David Taylor Ship Model Testing facility organized a thorough reexamination of the documentary evidence for both dates during which suspicious documents were uncovered in the National Archives. An investigation by the FBI revealed that a number of documents were written on paper dating to a later period and typed using a typewriter manufactured after the date on the letters. Design details of the ship, as well as the discovery that all of the questionable documents were falsified, finally settled the date controversy. Maritime scholars long ago reached consensus that the vessel currently moored in Baltimore is the 1850s U.S. Navy sloop-of-war, not an earlier 1797 frigate.
- USS *Constellation* was built at the navy yard at Norfolk, Virginia, and launched in August of 1854. The sloop-of-war has undergone several changes over the years to accommodate her various maritime roles, including "restorations" attempting to create an 1812-era ship. Her last major reconstruction in the late 1990s restored the ship to her original appearance as a mid-nineteenth century sloop. As of 2010, *Constellation* closely conforms to its configuration during the Civil War.

Owner of Property: City of Baltimore

Acreage of Property: Less than one acre.

Origins of Nomination: When designated as a NHL in 1963 discussions about the origins of the *Constellation* were still unresolved. The original nomination stated that the ship was the 1797 frigate. Once consensus was reached within the maritime community on the actual construction date of the ship, it became necessary to update the documentation for this NHL. In 2009, funding was provided by the African-American National Historic Landmarks Assessment Study to hire a contractor to revise the documentation. A well-known naval historian who recently completed a history of the Anti-Slavery Patrol authored the revised NHL nomination.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- Updating the nomination for this NHL will not only provide accurate documentation for this property but demonstrates that the National Historic Landmarks Program is committed to the highest standards of documentation for those properties deemed nationally significant.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- One local historian still believes that the ship moored in Baltimore dates to 1797. It is possible, although unlikely, that he may object to any discussion of another date despite the discovery that documents supporting the 1797 date are falsified, and the huge preponderance of data supporting a later vintage.

Landmarks Committee Comments:

Landmarks Committee Recommendation: Designation. Dr. Allan moved, Dr. Odo seconded; unanimous approval.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of 10/08/10):

Christopher Rowsom, Executive Director, Historic Ships of Baltimore

Advisory Board Recommendation: